1:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1923
NP12 Winnebago NP12

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a. EXTERIOR OF MEDICINE DANCE LODGE

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b. INTERIOR OF MEDICINE DANCE LODGE

[Facing p. 350 (A)]

1:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1923
NP12 Winnebago NP12

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a. EXTERIOR OF MEDICINE DANCE LODGE

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b. INTERIOR OF MEDICINE DANCE LODGE

[Facing p. 350 (8)]

1:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1923
NP12 Winnebago NP12

CHAPTER XVI

THE PEYOTE CULT

General Description

794 Owing to the great importance of one of the modern cults found among the Winnebago, the so-called Mescal or Peyote, it will be discussed here in some detail. Not only is this cult of great prominence in the life of the modern Winnebago, but as its inception and progress can be followed out in considerable detail it is of great significance for the study of their religion.

[346] The ceremony is generally held in a building called by the Peyote worshipers a church, although it frequently takes place in the open also. In the early days of its organization as many meetings as possible were held. In 1910 there was a tendency to restrict the number and to have them generally take place on Saturday night. In 1913, after the first enthusiasm of the new converts had died out, the author was informed that the meetings were rarely held more than once a week. Around Christmas and beginning with July a series of meetings was held, lasting from a week to 10 days, as a rule. The Christmas meetings were not prominent in 1910, but the July ones seem to have been held from the beginning. They represent, of course, merely a substitution for the older pagan ceremonies and games that were held about that time.

796 In the early days the ceremony was opened by a prayer from the 794 founder, and this was followed by an introductory speech. Thereupon the leader sang a Peyote song, to the accompaniment of a drum. [533] Then another speech was delivered, and when it was finished the drum and other regalia were passed to the man to the right. This man, in turn, delivered a speech and sang a song, and when he was finished, passed the regalia to the third man, who subsequently passed it to the fourth one. The fourth man, when he was finished, returned it to the leader. In this way the regalia passed from one person to another throughout the night. It not infrequently happens that one of these four gets tired and gives up his place temporarily to some other member of the cult. At intervals they stopped to eat [276] or drink peyote. At about midnight the peyote, as a rule, begins to affect some people. These generally arise and deliver self-accusatory [583] speeches, and make more or less formal confessions, after which they go around shaking hands with everyone and asking forgiveness.

5: McKern E-5 (1927) 1929
NP12 Winnebago NP12

[P. 147]

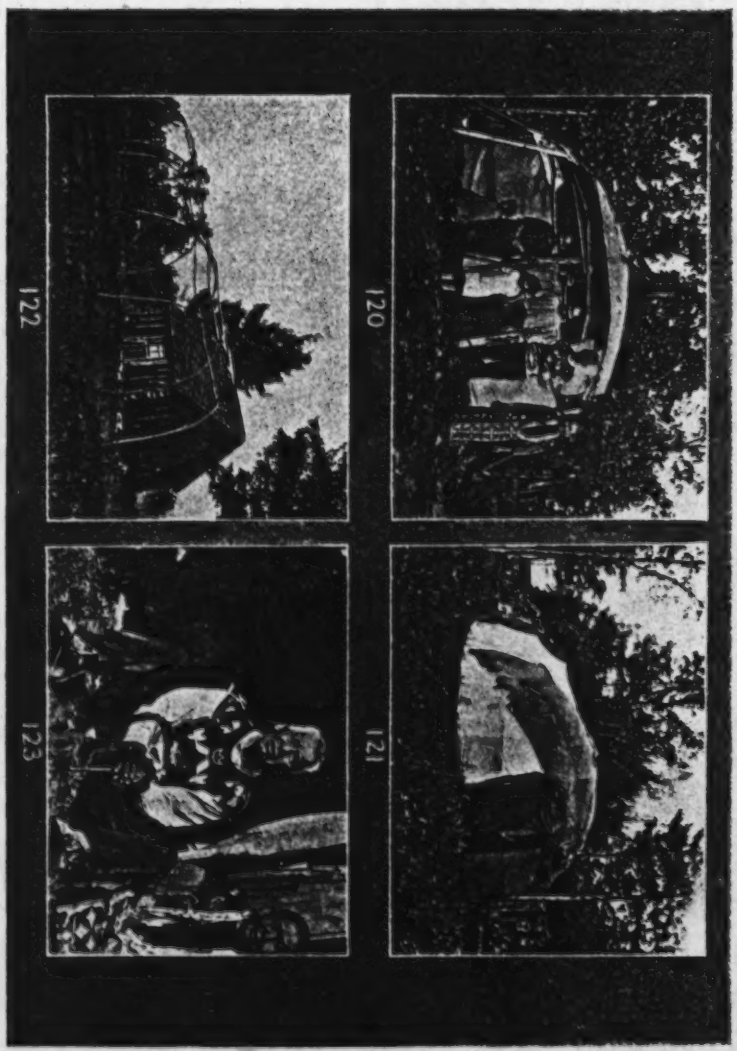

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Fig. 120.—Big Wave and his family standing before his house.
Fig. 121.—Medicine Lodge near Big Wave's home.
Fig. 122.—Framework of the War-bundle Ceremony lodge.
Fig. 123.—Big Wave making sacred fire, accompanied by his wife.

5: McKern . E-5 (1927) 1929
NP12 Winnebago NP12

people attend as a matter of courtesy, or to keep peace in the family. It was my good fortune to attend such a meeting, a war-bundle ceremony, in October, 1927. Mr. A. White, whose Indian name is *Teus-tcu-he-de-ga* (Big Wave), figure 120, is custodian of the war-bundle of the Thunderbird clan of the Wisconsin Rapids band of Winnebago. Word came to me through his son-in-law, Mr. U. S. White of Milwaukee, that a war-bundle feast would be held shortly, and that I was specially invited to attend.

As Mr. White and his family also wished to make the trip, we drafted a Museum car into service and joined forces. In addition to Mr. White and his wife and two children, Mr. Alton Fisher was persuaded, without much difficulty, to join me in representing the Department of Anthropology.

We arrived at Wisconsin Rapids late at night, and were up early on the following morning and on our way to the site selected for the ceremony. Upon arriving at his home, we were courteously received by the custodian of the bundle, and privileged to meet his family and many others who were in the midst of preparations for the feast.

The regular war bundle ceremony of the Thunderbird clan is a feast and dance given in honor of various spirits, chiefly the Thunderbirds, who are the spiritual directors of war, and the Night Spirits. It is held in an oblong wigwam shaped like the medicine lodge of the Winnebago and neighboring Algonkin groups, figure 121, and similarly constructed of a frame-work of bent poles covered with birch bark or mats, or more recently with canvas or other cloth. Big Wave had directed the construction of the lodge for this particular ceremony in an area immediately adjoining his dwelling lodge, figure 122. The single door was placed at the end of the lodge, facing east.

The lodge was small, made so to accommodate the limited number expected to attend, and consequently it was decided to cook the feast over outside fires, an irregular, though not unusual procedure. Therefore, only a single fire was built in the lodge, centrally situated at the eastern end not more than three paces from the door. Since the fire was to be new, sacred fire, the ceremonial fire-making equipment from the war bundle was employed. This consisted of a flat, rectangular base of oak, nearly perforated in many places with charred drill holes, and a drilling element of softer wood. Big Wave himself officiated in the fire making, figure 123. Kneeling, he placed the basepiece between his knees, with tinder conveniently near. Then one end of the drill was fitted into one of the holes in the base, and the shaft was rapidly rotated between his hands. Soon smoke curled up from the point of friction. The bits of glowing wood dust so produced were quickly applied to the tinder and carefully blown to a small flame. Then light kindling was applied, followed by heavier sticks until the fire was be-

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[For the myth of the creation of the Medicine Dance lodge and its symbolism see category 116, pp. 121-122.]

Crashing Thunder

Our feast was given in a lodge that had eight fireplaces. The host always sits near the last fireplace, at the east end. There we stood crying to the spirits. My older brother fell to the ground from fatigue and exhaustion. We were stark naked except for our breech-clouts. When this prayer was finished we put on our moccasins. Then the host greeted the participants as follows:

"I greet you; I greet you all, war-bundle possessors. My grandparents, especially my grandfather, concentrated their minds upon this ceremony for me. The fireplace, the food, the offerings, with which the spirits blessed my grandfather, that I am going to ask for myself to-day. However weakly I may wobble about in trying to do the proper thing to-day, I know that my elders present here will extend their aid to me. I am now going to offer some tobacco to you all. War-bundles possessors, I greet you all."

Following the speech came the prayers to the various spirits:

Hearken O Earthmaker, our father, I am about to offer tobacco to you. My ancestor concentrated his mind upon you and that with which you blessed him I now ask of you directly. I ask for the small amount of life you granted him, aye for four times the blessings you bestowed upon him. May I never meet with trouble in life.

O Grandfather, chief of the Thunderbirds, you who live in the west, here is a handful of tobacco. Extend to me the deer with which you blessed my ancestor. I pray you to accept this tobacco from me. May I never meet with trouble in life.

§14. *Initiation into the Medicine Dance*

*159 The person who had died and whose place I was to take was an uncle of my father's. I was glad of the opportunity for I had always liked the Medicine Dance whenever I had seen it. I had aways enjoyed watching from the outside what was taking place inside and I had always been filled with envy. So naturally I was very glad to join and anxious as to what would happen. We proceeded to the place where the ceremony was to be held, traveling from Tomah to Wittenberg. Sometimes we would have to walk, but I enjoyed it nevertheless. I was very happy.

Finally we arrived at the place and my father explained to the people that he had turned over his right of membership to me. They were quite satisfied.

*159 We were to build the ceremonial lodge immediately, •346 so we went and cut the poles for it after measuring 196 the length required. Of course, we hunted around and got the kind of poles always used for that purpose. Then we constructed the lodge. We stuck the poles in the earth. We worked together with three old men, brothers of the man who had died. They told me that this ceremony was a holy affair, that it was Earth-maker's play. We made an offering of tobacco at every ooo move we made. I, of course, thought that it must

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[787] and clairvoyance, and thinks they have had them for centuries. They use a long and
[346] large lodge a [blank] prepared for the purpose, in which all those allowed to witness the ceremonies are assembled. Adjoin-
[343] ing this house is a bark tent built in a conical form as a steam house. They excavate a hole in the ground, heat large stones in a fire to a great heat, and then put them in this hole, and cover them over and seat the initiate over them. He is then covered around with blankets so that none of the steam may escape, after which water is poured on the stones and the neophyte is
[783] enveloped in a roasting steam bath. This is
[776] the first act, and the object is to steam all evil spirits out of him.

He is then led in to the house, after the steaming process in some instances has been repeated once or twice. He is then blindfolded and led around the house. Pres-
[534] ently the singers beat the drum, shake the rattles, and commence singing a tune; then commences the dance, which is joined in by all present who wish to do so. The wom-
[562] en are members of the medicine lodge as well as the men, and they join in the songs and in the dance. After the dancing is done, or perhaps he may have stood in the midst of it there is a suspension of all sing-
[756] ing and dancing. Several medicine men then advance towards the neophyte, pointing their medicine bags at him, then drawing them back. This advancing and receding and ejaculating certain words calculated to work up the mind of the novitiate into a regular phrenzy.

Presently they reach him when they hit their medicine bags against his body, he still being blindfolded and at the same time uttering a shrill exclamation. The Judge said the novitiate jumped up and fell flat on
[158] his face as if dead and that apparently with-